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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 006134

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/23/2007
TAGS: PHUM PREL KPAO IT UNHRC
SUBJECT: UNHCR PROFILE: ITALY

REF: STATE 252917

CLASSIFIED BY: A/POL MC GARY ROBBINS, REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D)

1. (C) FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS KEYED TO REFTEL QUESTIONS TO ASSIST IN PREPARATION OF CHR COUNTRY PROFILE FOR ITALY.

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2. (C) THE MFA WILL DEVELOP AND COORDINATE ITALY'S POSITIONS ON CHR RESOLUTIONS AND RELATED ISSUES; BUT IT WILL FOLLOW OVERARCHING PARAMETERS AND, IN SOME CASES, SPECIFIC POSITIONS FORMULATED BY PRIME MINISTER BERLUSCONI AND HIS ADVISORS. BERLUSCONI RECENTLY NAMED A NEW FOREIGN MINISTER, FRANCO FRATTINI, AFTER DUAL-HATTING HIMSELF AS ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER FOR ELEVEN MONTHS, BUT HE CLEARLY INTENDS TO KEEP AN ACTIVE HAND IN FOREIGN POLICY. WITHIN THE MFA, HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE DIRECTOR COUNSELOR GIUSEPPE CALVETTA AND HIS STAFF COORDINATE ITALIAN POSITIONS AND SHOULD SERVE AS TRAFFIC COPS BETWEEN ROME AND THE ITALIAN DELEGATIONS IN BRUSSELS AND GENEVA. THE COUNTRY DESKS AND DIRECTORATES ARE EXPECTED TO TAKE THE LEAD IN DEVELOPING POSITIONS ON KEY COUNTRY RESOLUTIONS. MULTILATERAL AFFAIRS DIRECTOR GENERAL (A/S-EQUIVALENT) GIANCARLO ARAGONA HAS SHOWN A PROPENSITY (MOST RECENTLY REGARDING LIBYA'S NOMINATION AS CHR-59 CHAIR) TO WADE INTO KEY ISSUES AND CALL COUNTERPARTS DIRECTLY.

3. CONTACT INFO: DIRECTOR GENERAL (PERSONAL RANK OF MINISTER) GIANCARLO ARAGONA: 39-06-3691-2174
DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL (PERSONAL RANK OF MINISTER) CLAUDIO BISOGNIERO: 39-06-3691-2222
COUNSELOR GIUSEPPE CALVETTA: 39-06-3691-2240

4. ITALY IS NOT A MEMBER OF CHR-59, BUT ITS MEMBERSHIP ON THE EU TROIKA (AS THE NEXT EU PRESIDENT FOLLOWING GREECE) SHOULD GIVE IT SUBSTANTIAL, IF INDIRECT, INFLUENCE OVER COMMON EU POSITIONS ON SPECIFIC CHR TOPICS THAT WOULD THEN BE DEPLOYED BY THOSE MEMBER-STATES SERVING ON THE COMMISSION. ITALY'S PRINCIPAL GOALS FOR THE 2003 COMMISSION ARE TO MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE THE COMMISSION'S EFFECTIVENESS AND TO REINFORCE FOR
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ITS OWN PROSPECTS FOR RETURNING TO THE COMMISSION IN 2004. (ITALY WITHDREW ITS CANDIDACY WITHIN THE WEOG FOR CHR-59 IN ORDER TO CLEAR THE WAY FOR RENEWED U.S. MEMBERSHIP.)

5. POSSIBLE LEVERAGE: IN EXCHANGE FOR POSTPONING THEIR OWN RETURN TO THE CHR, THE ITALIANS EXPECTED ENHANCED CONSULTATIONS WITH THE U.S. ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES. COUCHED UNDER THIS RUBRIC, ADDITIONAL BILATERAL EXCHANGES COULD BE AN ESPECIALLY USEFUL MECHANISM TO INFLUENCE THEIR THINKING IN ADVANCE OF INTERNAL EU DELIBERATIONS. THE ITALIANS ARE FAITHFUL, GENERALLY ENTHUSIASTIC PARTICIPANTS IN THE EU'S COORDINATION PROCESS THAT PRODUCES COMMON UNION-WIDE POSITIONS. HOWEVER, THE BERLUSCONI GOVERNMENT HAS SHOWN AN INCREASED WILLINGNESS TO RESIST REFLEXIVELY ACCEPTING AN EU CONSENSUS POSITION TO THE DETRIMENT OF ITS NATIONAL INTERESTS (AN APPROACH THAT UNFORTUNATELY HAS NOT WORKED TO OUR ADVANTAGE IN THE LIBYAN CHAIRMANSHIP DEBATE). WE MAY BE ABLE TO USE THIS WILLINGNESS TO INFLUENCE THE ITALIAN POSITION ON SPECIFIC CHR TOPICS OF ESPECIALLY HIGH IMPORTANCE -- BUT WE WOULD NEED TO CHOOSE CAREFULLY. LIKE OUR EMBASSIES IN OTHER EU CAPITALS, WE CANNOT STRESS ENOUGH THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY ENGAGEMENT, BEFORE EU DELIBERATIONS BEGIN TO COALESCE AROUND A COMMON POSITION. AS THE DISCUSSIONS OVER LIBYAN CHAIRMANSHIP HAVE SHOWN, ITALY HAS A FAIRLY UNIQUE POSITION ON LIBYA GIVEN THE HISTORICAL RELATIONSHIP, COMMERCIAL TIES AND GENERAL PHILOSOPHY OF ENGAGEMENT. PM BERLUSCONI'S OCTOBER VISIT TO TRIPOLI REINFORCED THEIR INVESTMENT IN "REHABILITATING" AND LEFT THE MFA WITH LITTLE ROOM FOR MANEUVER. LIKE MANY EUROPEAN FOREIGN MINISTRIES, THE ITALIANS ARE IN MANY CASES SPREAD FAIRLY THIN. THE MFA WELCOMES DETAILED U.S. ASSESSMENTS AND INPUT ON INDIVIDUAL ISSUES.

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6. ITALIAN MEDIA ARE GENERALLY INTERESTED IN SENIOR-LEVEL USG OP-EDS OR SPEECHES IF EMPLOYED JUDICIOUSLY (I.E., NOT WEEKLY). APPEARANCES AND PRESENTATIONS BY A/S OR HIGHER OFFICIALS, EITHER IN PERSON OR VIA DVC, WOULD ALSO BE WELL-RECEIVED.

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